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THE WARBRINGER'S SON

AN ADVENTURE FOR CHARACTER LEVELS 1-3

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For the Authors and Playtesters: Making an impossible
deadline never looked so easy.

INTRODUCTION

Remember the golden days of role-playing, when adventures were underground, NPCs were there to be killed, and the finale of every dungeon was the dragon on the 20th level? Well, those days are back. *Dungeon Crawl Classics* feature bloody combat and intriguing dungeons. Each adventure is 100% good, solid dungeon crawl, with the monsters you know, the traps you fear, and the secret doors you know must be there somewhere.

The Warbringer's Son was the 2008 DCC Open Tournament at Gen Con Indy. Teams were allowed to choose four characters from the list of six pregenerated characters provided in the Player's Pack.

The Warbringer's Son is designed to be a challenge for four characters of 1st level. A well-balanced party of experienced players has the best chances of defeating Kainos and ending the threat to their village.

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

Adrasticus, the Bandit Lord, has ruled over the lawless hinterlands for years. The good, stout people of this region have been forced to pay exorbitant annual tribute, leaving them barely able to scrape by in their ramshackle huts and villages. In one such village, four heroes have taken a blood oath that Adrasticus will answer for the misery of their people. By their actions, they hope to save their village.

Little do they know that Adrasticus is merely a lackey of Kainos, the cyclops scion of the god of war, Xeleuth the Warbringer. The threat to their village is greater than a petty tyrant...it is to be the first casualty of Kainos' blood-drenched ascension to his inheritance.

TELLING IT LIKE IT WAS: THE TOURNAMENT SHUFFLE

If you read the event listing for Gen Con Indy 2008, the event description mentioned how the Warbringer cursed the heroes; this was *Test of the Gods*, a tournament for 7th-level characters. All three rounds were already written in 3.5E with the intention of converting it when 4E was finally released.

The secret history of *Test*, though, was that it was a SEQUEL to what was going to have been the 2008 Free RPG Day content, a short module called *Maze of the Cyclops*, which was originally pitched to be the 2008 tourney. Since 4E didn't come out in time, however, *Maze* was shelved and we did *Punjar: The Tarnished Jewel* instead.

Still with me? Good, 'cause it's about to get complicated.

In late May, it was brought up that the role-playing public would have little-to-no experience with 4E by Gen Con. The sage decision was made to change the tournament to 1st level.

Test dealt with some fairly big-league stuff, though. That module couldn't work at a level that low, so we went to the writing team and asked them to shelve what they'd worked on all spring in order to write a new tournament module. Oh, and since 4E didn't come out until early June, it needed to be done in two weeks.

To expedite things, we made the decision to resuscitate *Maze*, thus bringing the entire tournament module process full-circle. Using that kernel, Chris, Mike, Rick, and I wrote *The Warbringer's Son*.

Then the playtesting started...

GAME MASTERS SECTION

SCALING INFORMATION

The Warbringer's Son was the 2008 Gen Con DCC Open Tournament module. It is intended to be played as written, with the provided pregenerated characters. As a tournament module, it is a dire challenge for even experienced gamers.

If you decide to incorporate it into a "casual" game, you should make serious changes, considering the following suggestions:

Weaker parties (3 or fewer heroes, or a "casual game"): In area 1-1, remove one level from Marta and one zombie grapestomper. In area 1-3, remove one orc axeman. In area 1-4, replace the manticores with two human bullies (use the stats from area 1-5); start the bullies standing near the ballista. For area 1-5, remove one level from Adrasticus and Melampus, and change the trapdoor so that it cannot be a trap.

In area 2-1, remove two levels from the blazing skeleton and the deathlock wight. In area 1-3, remove one level from the shadowhunter bats and the dark caver. In area 2-7, remove three levels from the dark stalker and two levels from the dark creeper.

Remove one level from Mageva and the razorfang drake swarms in area 3-3, from the loam spies in area 3-4, from the bonepile swarm in area 3-5, and from Kainos in area 3-6b.

Remove the "no resting" restriction. All preset damage is an average result, and you should keep to this formula (adjusted as you subtract levels). Make sure the party is 2nd level by the time they reach Round Three.

Adjust the treasure accordingly.

Stronger parties (5 or more heroes): Play the adventure as it's written, but disregard the preset damage and recharge sidebars (roll them as normal) and the "no resting" restriction. Make sure the party is 2nd level by the time they reach Round Three.

GETTING THE PLAYERS INVOLVED

The adventure begins with the characters at the rear entrance of Adrasticus's stronghold. For the tournament, the heroes were there to save their home village from privation. For a home game, the DM should devise an appropriate plot hook or adapt one of the following to get the characters started:

- A substantial reward is offered for the head of Adrasticus. His neck need not still be attached to it to collect.
- The city nobles didn't care about the Bandit Lord until he stole their favorite playwright. They hired the heroes to deliver the ransom, but the party doesn't know that Adrasticus plans to keep both the money and lokrasus for himself!

- A powerful fleet has been seen gathering off an insignificant island not far away. Messengers have been observed passing between the fleet and the fortress of the Bandit Lord...some trouble seems to be brewing.
- Grim-faced horsemen have ridden from town to town, posting a bill that reads: "Either these individuals journey to the Bandit Lord's lair within the month or your villages will burn. Kainos." The Warbringer's son is trying to draw out those the Bloodstained Oracle said would stand in his way.

BLOODSTAINED ORACLE LORE

Players hearing that title won't know what it means, but if they ask, they can make Religion checks to learn the following:

- DC 10: A "bloodstained oracle" is a zealot of a god of war or slaughter; for their dedication they are gifted with foresight used to guide commanders and those seeking to foster bloodshed
- DC 15: A "bloodstained oracle" demands and requires a price in blood for its services...a life must be taken before its powers will function. A "bloodstained oracle" can be defeated in combat, but it has a pact with its patron gods, who restore it to life shortly thereafter
- DC 20: The nature of this pact is always linked to some item, typically something emblematic of the "bloodstained oracle's" god...if this item can be corrupted somehow, the "bloodstained oracle" can be truly slain

ITEMS IN BRACKETS

Throughout the dungeon, there are several phrases or numbers set in brackets, like this: [3]. These items refer to conditions or values used during the Fifth Annual DCC Open Tournament as it was played at Gen Con Indy 2008. In the case of phrases, they are instructions to the tournament Judges. In the case of numbers, they reflect a predetermined result that applied to all teams equally.

A WORD ON NAMES

The names "Xeলেখ," "the North," and "Gazihmon" used in this round refer specifically to places, beasts, and gods found in *DCC #35: Gazetteer of the Known Realms* and *DCC #52: Chronicle of the Fiend*.

For those unfamiliar with *DCC #35*, "the North" refers to a quasi-European continent. At one point in its history, the demon prince Gazihmon plunged it into war. Unconnected to Gazihmon but amused by his actions is the god of war, Xeলেখ.

The DM, of course, can and should tailor this adventure to fit his or her own campaign.



ROUND ONE: BACKGROUND STORY

If a single number is presented, that number was always the one used. If it refers to damage and a critical hit was confirmed, the attack's crit modifier was applied to the given number. If a series of numbers was presented, that indicated a sequence to follow (and repeat, if necessary).

For falling damage, instead of calculating every possible height from which a PC could fall, it was assumed he or she took 1d10 [6] points of damage per 10 feet fallen.

RECHARGE SIDEBARS

For powers that recharge on random die rolls, look for sidebars near the appropriate encounters. They list a series of expressions like "round +X"; these expressions are how many rounds after its initial use that a power recharges.

The expressions represent random die rolls made over 10 hypothetical combat rounds. If combat lasts more than ten rounds after a recharge power is used, go through the cycle again, adding +10 to the numbers displayed.

For example, "round +2" becomes "round +12."

ROUND ONE ENCOUNTER TABLE

To help the DM prepare, we have included a quick reference table showing all encounters at a glance. Loc — the location number keyed to the map for the encounter. Pg — the module page number that the encounter can be found on. Type — this indicates if the encounter is a combat (C), hazard (H), puzzle (P), or trap (T). Encounter — the key monsters, traps, or NPCs that can be found in the encounter. Names in italics are classed NPCs. EL — the encounter level.

Adrasticus, the self-styled "Bandit Lord," enjoys the finer things in life: good food, wine, olives, and dramatic performances. He realized early it was easier to take these things than grow or pay for them. He also quickly learned that people are more willing to give him what he wants if they think he'll kill them, and the quickest way to make someone think you'll kill them is to kill a whole lot of other people — particularly those with nothing you want. Thus began his rapid ascension as the tyrant of this bleak area.

His ill-gotten gains over the years provided much enjoyment, and Adrasticus grew soft. Then, one day, a piteous crone appeared at his doorstep, wailing about the doom that was coming to the region. Since the aged woman did not fit into Category A (people with things I want), Adrasticus decided she was in Category B (people I should kill as an example). He ordered his ruffians to shoot her dead, and they complied...but she did not. Then he ordered his men to club her skull, and again she would not die. Finally the Bandit Lord cut her down with his sword, and after a moment she stood up again, proclaiming that she was a Bloodstained Oracle of Xeleuth, and she had come to offer Adrasticus doom...or salvation.

Kainos, the hag claimed, was coming, and with him a storm of death and bloodshed not seen in the North since Gazihmon...a conflict mighty enough to honor the cyclops' father, the Warbringer. Adrasticus could either be the first victim of that war or serve as its vanguard. In exchange for tribute and fealty, he and his men could serve Kainos. The Bandit Lord agreed, swallowing his anger... for a time.

Loc	Pg	Type	Encounter	EL
I-1	15	C	Two human ruffians Six zombie grapestompers Marta, human elite priestess	2
I-2	19	C/T	Three zombie grapesorters Barrel trap	1
I-3	21	C/T	Two orc axemen Human bully Orc sniveling coward, Three bear snare traps	3
I-4	24	C/H	Arkatos, hobgoblin warmage Manticore stripling Crevasse hazard Six+ human ruffraff Three+ orc whipping boys	3+
I-5	28	C/T	Adrasticus the Bandit Lord Two human bullies Melampus the Rat-Catcher Carnivorse foal Stage trapdoor	4
I-6	33	P/T	Clockwork box skill challenge Poison mist trap	2